UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FILED FOR THE DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS FILED

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OMNIPOINT HOLDINGS, INC.

Plaintiff,

Defendants

V.

THE CITY OF LOWELL, THE
CITY OF LOWELL ZONING
BOARD OFAPPEALS and ALAN
KAZANJIAN, VENA NUON, DONNA
MCMAHON, DAN SQUEGLIA and
JACK FLYNN, in their capacities as
members of the City of Lowell
Zoning Board of Appeals

U.S. DISTRICT COURT DISTRICT OF MASS.

05 CV 1 0 2 83 MI W

MAGISTRATE JUDGE JLA

COMPLAINT

INTRODUCTION

This action arises out of the unlawful denial by the City of Lowell Zoning Board of Appeals ("Zoning Board") of an application, pursuant to the City of Lowell Zoning Ordinance ("Zoning Ordinance") by Omnipoint Holdings, Inc. ("Omnipoint") for a special permit to allow Omnipoint to install three panel antennas and appurtenant radio equipment within an existing church steeple, in which Omnipoint intended to replace existing wooden louvers with radio frequency permeable louvers, at the property known as and numbered 204 Liberty Street, Lowell, MA (the "Property"). The antennas, the accompanying radio equipment and the radio frequency permeable louvers would have no adverse aesthetic impact upon the area, as they would not be visible from outside the church building. This denial violates the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996, 47 U.S.C. § 332. As a result, Omnipoint seeks an injunction

from this Court directing the Zoning Board to grant Omnipoint's application for a special permit and for an injunction and order of mandamus directing the Town, through its officers and agents, to issue a building permit with respect to the construction, installation and operation of the louvers and wireless communications facility.

PARTIES

- 1. Plaintiff, Omnipoint, is a Delaware corporation with a principal place of business at 50 Vision Boulevard, East Providence, Rhode Island. Omnipoint is a leader in commercial wireless Personal Communication Services ("PCS") throughout the United States. Omnipoint successfully bid upon and received PCS wireless broadcast licenses from the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") for several cities, including the greater Boston area.
- 2. Defendant, the City of Lowell, (the "City"), is a duly authorized municipality constituted and existing under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- 3. Defendant, the Zoning Board, is a duly authorized unit of the City that has been delegated the authority, among other things, to grant special permits under the Zoning Ordinance. A true and accurate copy of the Ordinance is attached hereto as Exhibit A.
- 4. Defendants, Alan Kazanjian, Vesna Nuon, Donna McMahon, Dan Squeglia and Jack Flynn are each residents of the City and together serve as the Zoning Board that denied Omnipoint's application for the special permit at issue in this action.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

5. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction of this action under 28 U.S.C. § 1331, as this action arises under the laws of the United States, specifically § 332 of the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996.

6. Venue is proper in this Court under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b), since the defendants each reside in this District, and the events and/or omissions giving rise to this action occurred in this District.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The Personal Communications Service Technology

- 7. Omnipoint is a communications venture committed to providing integrated wireless personal communications services by building a national wireless network using PCS technology. PCS technology is a new generation of wireless service that uses digital transmission to improve the services available to consumers.
- 8. Unlike cellular services using analog-based systems, PCS digital technology converts voice or data signals into a stream of digits to allow a single radio channel to carry multiple simultaneous signal transmissions. This allows Omnipoint to offer services often unavailable in analog-based systems, such as secured transmissions and enhanced voice, high-speed data, paging and imaging capabilities as well as voice mail, call forwarding and call waiting.
- 9. Mobile telephones using PCS technology operate by transmitting a radio signal to antennas mounted on a tower, pole, building, or other structure. The antenna feeds the signal to electronic devices housed in a small equipment cabinet, or base station. The base station is connected by microwave, fiber optic cable, or ordinary telephone wire to the Base Station Controller, subsequently routing the calls throughout the world.
- 10. Because the PCS system has a lower signal and a much higher frequency than traditional cellular technology, the range between the PCS mobile telephone and the antennas is limited.

- 11. In order to provide continuous service to a PCS telephone user, coverage must overlap in a grid pattern resembling a honeycomb. In the event that Omnipoint is unable to construct a cell site within a specific geographic area, Omnipoint will not be able to provide service to the consumers within that area.
- 12. Omnipoint's engineers use complex computer programs and extensive field testing to complete a propagation study, which shows where cell sites need to be located in order to provide service. The propagation study also takes into account the topography of the land, the coverage boundaries of neighboring cells and other factors. In order for the entire system to be operational, there must be properly placed cell sites installed and functioning so that seamless coverage can be realized, and only when the entire system is operational will a PCS telephone user have service and an uninterrupted conversation throughout a given territory. If there is no functioning cell site within a given area, there would be no PCS telephone service for customers within that area, and mobile customers who travel into the area will experience blocked calls, in which callers experience an abrupt and complete loss of signal.
- 13. Based upon Omnipoint's research and analysis as part of an extensive review of call traffic in the targeted area of Lowell, Omnipoint determined that, in order to fill a significant gap in the quality of its coverage, which would otherwise preclude its provision of seamless, uninterrupted coverage in the targeted portion of Lowell, Omnipoint needed to mount three panel antennas in the immediate vicinity of 204 Liberty Street, Lowell.
- 14. Omnipoint determined that the only viable alternative sites in the immediate vicinity of 204 Liberty Street, Lowell were not available for the construction of a wireless communications facility.
- 15. Accordingly, Omnipoint sought, through its design and its application, to install three panel antennas within the church steeple at Calvary Baptist Church located at 204 Liberty

Street, to replace the louvers within the steeple with louvers permeable by radio frequency waves, and to install appurtenant equipment within the church in a manner that neither alters the appearance of the church nor has any negative aesthetic impact upon the surrounding neighborhood.

Federal Statutory Control Over PCS Siting

- Section 704 of the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (the "Act"), 47 U.S.C. 16. § 332(c), governs federal, state and local government regulation of the siting of PCS facilities such as the one at issue here.
- The Act provides that any person adversely affected by a state or local 17. government's act, or failure to act, that is inconsistent with § 332(c)(7) of the Act may seek expedited review in the federal courts. 47 U.S.C. § 332(c)(7)(B)(v).

The Request for A Special Permit by Omnipoint

- Under Article 7.6.3 of the Zoning Ordinance, an applicant for a 18. telecommunications facility must apply for special permit from the Zoning Board.
- On or about December 9, 2004, Omnipoint submitted its application for a Special 19. Permit to construct and operate a wireless telecommunications facility, as described above, within the existing church and steeple at Calvary Baptist Church at 204 Liberty Street, Lowell.
- Under Article 7.6.5 of the Zoning Ordinance, the applicant must, before submitting 20. its application to the Zoning Board, provide substantial evidence to the Planning Board that none of the existing structures or telecommunications towers within the City can accommodate the applicant's proposed antenna as a suitable site for the applicant to meet its coverage needs.
- Omnipoint provided substantial evidence to the Planning Board that existing 21. structures and telecommunications towers within the City of Lowell were not suitable to remedy

the gap in its coverage within the section of Lowell for which Omnipoint sought the special permit at issue in this case.

- 22. The Planning Board reviewed Omnipoint's evidence and, on January 7, 2005, recommended to the Zoning Board that Omnipoint's application for a special permit be approved "subject to meeting the standards of the telecommunications ordinance and addressing any concerns with interference and ensuring that the project will not negatively effect the quality of life in the neighborhood." A true and accurate copy of the Planning Board recommendation is attached hereto as Exhibit B.
- 23. Following its receipt of the Planning Board's recommendation, the Zoning Board held a single hearing on Omnipoint's application. At the hearing, Omnipoint presented evidence, which was not refuted, regarding the gap in its coverage and its corresponding need for the antennas it proposed to place within the church steeple. Additionally, Omnipoint presented evidence of the lack of alternative sites in the area that would allow it to provide seamless, uninterrupted service to its customers.
- 24. In addition, Omnipoint representatives presented evidence concerning the low impact of its design on the neighborhood in which the church is located from both an aesthetic standpoint and logistic standpoint.
- 25. The Zoning Board apprised Omnipoint's representatives that it had received a petition signed by eleven citizens of Lowell opposing issuance of the special permit.
- 26. At the hearing, a single member of the public, an abutter, voiced opposition to the special permit for which Omnipoint applied. She expressed concern about the "health effects" of the proposed facility. There was no other evidence presented against Omnipoint at the hearing.
- 27. On January 11, 2005, the Zoning Board voted unanimously to deny Omnipoint's request for a special permit, finding, without citing any evidence, "(2) a literal enforcement of the

Bylaw would be a substantial hardship to the owner, in that (3)There will be no substantial derogation from the intent and purpose of the Bylaw because Due to neighborhood opposition and petition signatures presented, the request is denied by unanimous vote of this Board."

There were no further findings or evidence in support of the Zoning Board's decision. A true and accurate copy of the Decision of the Zoning Board of Appeals is attached hereto as Exhibit C.

COUNT I - Violation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996

- 28. Omnipoint hereby realleges and incorporates by reference the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 27 above as if fully set forth herein.
- 29. Article VI, Clause 2, of the United States Constitution, commonly known as the Supremacy Clause, provides, in relevant part, that "[t]his Constitution and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof... shall be the Supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding."
- 30. The Act governs the regulation of the placement, construction, and modification of personal wireless service facilities and, under the Supremacy Clause, preempts state laws and municipal ordinances or by-laws affecting such facilities to the extent that such laws, ordinances, and by-laws conflict with the Act.
- 31. Omnipoint's application for a special permit constitutes a request to provide "personal wireless services" within the meaning of the Act, and, as such, is entitled to the protection of the Act.
- 32. Pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 332(c)(7)(B)(iv): "[n]o State or local government or instrumentality thereof may regulate the placement, construction, and modification of personal wireless service facilities on the basis of the environmental effects of radio frequency emissions

to the extent that such facilities comply with the Commission's regulations concerning such emissions."

- Omnipoint's proposed cell Site complies with all state and FCC regulations 33. concerning radio frequency emissions.
- The Zoning Board's decision violated the Act's prohibition on state or local 34. governments regulating the placement, construction and modification of personal wireless service facilities on the basis of the environmental effects of radio frequency emissions. 47 U.S.C. § 332(c)(7)(B)(iv). Further, it violated the federal prohibition on state or local governments regulating federal radio frequency interference. 47 U.S.C. § 151 et seq.
- Pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 332(c)(7)(B)(iii): "Any decision by a State of local 35. government or instrumentality thereof to deny a request to place, construct or modify personal wireless service facilities shall be in writing and supported by substantial evidence contained in a written record."
- Omnipoint has fulfilled all of the criteria required by the Zoning Ordinance in 36. order to receive a special permit for a telecommunications facility.
- Defendants have failed to meet their burden of producing substantial evidence 37. supporting the Zoning Board's denial of Omnipoint's application for a special permit.
- Consequently, the Zoning Board's decision violated the Act's prohibition on state 38. or local governments denying the placement, construction and modification of personal wireless service facilities without substantial evidence and a written record. 47 U.S.C. § 332(c)(7)(B)(iii).
- In light of the foregoing, the Zoning Board's action is in violation of, and 39. preempted by, the Act and the Supremacy Clause, and should be set aside and enjoined by the Court on that basis.

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- 40. Pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 332(c)(7)(B), the "regulation of the placement, construction and modification of personal wireless service facilities by any State or local government or instrumentality thereof ...(II) shall not prohibit or have the effect of prohibiting the provision of personal wireless services".
- 41. Omnipoint has established that the denial of its request for a special permit to house three panel antennas within a steeple on the existing Calvary Baptist Church at 204 Liberty Street, Lowell, would result in a significant gap in its provision of wireless communication services to its customers and that there are no alternative sites within the affected area of Lowell on or from which it may otherwise fill its coverage gap.
- 42. Consequently, the Zoning Board's decision violated the Act's requirement that state or local governments not prohibit or effectively prohibit the provision of personal wireless services. 47 U.S.C. § 332(c)(7)(B)(II).
- 43. Accordingly, the Court should exercise its power to issue an order commanding the Zoning Board to grant the special permit for which Omnipoint applied.

WHEREFORE, Omnipoint respectfully requests the following relief as against the defendants:

- 1. An expedited review of the matters set forth in this Complaint;
- An injunction mandating that the Zoning Board grant approval of Omnipoint's request for a special permit;
- 3. An injunction and order of mandamus directing the Town, through its officers and agents, to issue a building permit for the construction and installation of radio frequency permeable louvers on the existing steeple of the Calvary Baptist Church at 204 Liberty Street, Lowell, the three antennas to be housed within the steeple, and any appurtenant equipment necessary for construction, implementation and

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operation of the wireless telecommunications facility proposed in Omnipoint's application;

- 4. A judgment that the defendants' actions violated the Act and are therefore void and invalid;
- 5. An award of Omnipoint's damages caused by defendants' violation of the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996;
- 6. An award of Omnipoint's costs of suit herein, including reasonable attorneys' fees; and
- 7. Such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,

OMNIPOINT HOLDINGS, INC.

By its attorneys,

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SJS 44 (Rev. 11/04)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required to the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

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